

No health cess in new National Health Policy: JP Nadda

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NEW DELHI: The new [National Health Policy](#) unveiled by the Centre has rejected earlier proposals to introduce a "health cess" to scale up the public investments in health care and make health a "fundamental right".

The new policy which was approved by the Union Cabinet yesterday aims at providing "assured health services to all" and also proposes free drugs, diagnostics and emergency care services in all public hospitals.

"The talks of introducing a health cess is wrong. There is no such thing mentioned in the new policy. There is no question of introducing health cess," Union Health Minister J P Nadda told reporters when asked why the proposal was dropped.

The earlier draft National Health Policy 2015 had said that the government would explore the creation of a health cess on the lines of the education cess for raising the necessary resources.

"Other than general taxation, this cess could mobilise contributions from specific commodity taxes - such as the taxes on tobacco, and alcohol, from specific industries and innovative forms of resource mobilisation," the earlier draft had said.

Asked what were the arguments put forward by various stakeholders as to why providing health as a "fundamental right" should not be there, Nadda said many suggestions came which called for making health an "assured" service.

"There are many things which come during discussions. Many types of discussions took place on the issue. Many people thought we should go for assured health care so we did it. We can only talk on the direction in which government is and can move forward," Nadda said.

Union Health secretary C K Mishra said that one of the basic points which was highlighted during discussions with states was that one should only put health as a fundamental right after there is adequate resources and facilities to back it up.

"One of the basic discussions with states which came up was that before you take this decision (making health a fundamental right), there is a need to have adequate resources and facilities to back it up. Let this policy build that facility and resource then we will come to that," Mishra said.

Earlier, officials had said that even the Cabinet note on the new policy which was sent earlier had not talked about making health a "fundamental right" as it will have "legal consequences".



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